



FINAL REPORT

New Iowans Study Committee

January 2006

MEMBERS

Senator Joe Bolkcom, Co-chairperson
Senator Paul McKinley, Co-chairperson
Senator James Hahn
Senator Jack Hatch
Senator Matt McCoy
Senator Maggie Tinsman

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Representative Deborah Berry
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AUTHORIZATION AND APPOINTMENT

The New Iowans Study Committee was established by the Legislative Council and charged to "review the impact of the growing population of immigrants, migrant workers, and refugees who are relocating to the state to live and work, often referred to as "New Iowans."



New lowans Study Committee

I. Committee Proceedings.

The Committee was authorized to conduct four public hearings and one meeting during the 2005 Interim. The Committee conducted the four public hearings according to the following schedule:

September 26, 2005
Des Moines East High School
Des Moines, Iowa

September 27, 2005
Arrowhead Educational Building
Storm Lake, Iowa

October 4, 2005
Indian Hills Community College
Ottumwa, Iowa

October 6, 2005
Davenport West High School
Davenport, Iowa

The Committee met on November 21, 2005, in Room 116 of the State Capitol. Following the November 21, 2005, meeting, the Committee amended the proposed minutes of the meeting upon a motion by Representative Wayne Ford. The amendment was agreed to by the Committee.

II. Des Moines Public Hearing.

A. Driver's Licenses.

Testimony included the requirements for receiving a driver's license, the impact receiving a driver's license has on obtaining motor vehicle insurance, the public safety ramifications of drivers driving without driver's licenses, and the difficulties faced by new lowans who cannot obtain a driver's license.

B. Public Safety.

Testimony included the difficulties experienced by police departments in recruiting and retaining multilingual public safety officers and the need for laws prohibiting the human trafficking of immigrants.

C. Workforce Issues.

Testimony included negative new lowan experiences for an employer located in Marshalltown, services and benefits provided by one employer in Des Moines that employs a significant number of new lowans, and the exploitation of undocumented workers by employers.

D. New lowan Centers.



Testimony included services available through New Iowan Centers and need for additional funding for New Iowan Centers.

E. Education.

Testimony included the difficulties new Iowans face in trying to obtain higher education degrees, the need for investment in new Iowan children so that they can become an asset to the state in the future, and the need for more multilingual teachers in schools.

F. Health and Human Services.

Testimony included recommendations related to the accessibility and cost of health care services and related to the language barriers that exist in health care services.

G. Federal Issues.

Testimony included requests that legislators encourage changes in federal immigration law, particularly in terms of simplifying the documentation procedures.

III. Storm Lake Public Hearing.

A. Driver's Licenses.

Testimony included the public safety ramifications of drivers driving without driver's licenses, the difficulties faced by new Iowans who cannot obtain a driver's license, and the impact receiving a driver's license has on obtaining motor vehicle insurance.

B. Public Safety.

Testimony included communication issues being the most important issue as the demographics of the community have changed and the need for additional funding for more language training.

C. Workforce Issues.

Testimony included the fact that professional training in other countries does not always transfer and immigrants frequently are underemployed as a result and the belief that financial assistance could be used for training in the trades.

D. New Iowan Centers.

Testimony included the services currently available to new Iowans at New Iowan Centers, the community outreach programs coordinated by the New Iowan Centers, and the fact that a migrant outreach specialist had been recently hired.

E. Education.

Testimony included the importance of after school programs for new Iowans, the heavy use of English as a Second Language (ESL) classes and need for more job security for the teachers of such classes, the large number of high-level students currently in ESL classes, the fact that educated students are many times underemployed or leave the state due to documentation problems, the need for Spanish grammar classes due to the illiteracy of some immigrants in their own language, and the need for extended funding for English Language Learners (ELL) programs.



F. Health and Human Services.

Testimony included the communication and languages difficulties as ongoing issues in the health care field, the fact that the Storm Lake health care community is currently engaged in a cultural exchange with the medical community in Mexico, the importance of community outreach and cultural competency training programs, new lowans frequently experiencing depression problems that are mostly untreated due to language barriers, dental insurance for children being an issue, and a lack of health insurance leading to new lowans not seeking health care services.

G. Federal Issues.

Testimony included that documentation issues continually arise and that reform of federal immigration laws is needed.

IV. Ottumwa Public Hearing.

A. Driver's Licenses.

Testimony included the requirements for obtaining a driver's license, the necessity of having a driver's license for personal and work matters, the need for interpreters at driver's license stations, and the need for a temporary or provisional driver's license for new lowans.

B. Public Safety.

Testimony included that Ottumwa police do not engage in racial profiling, the need for interpreters at the jail, the need for police officers that reflect the demographic makeup of the community, the cessation of human trafficking, and discriminatory treatment in the jail.

C. Workforce Issues.

Testimony included the need of all employers to provide all employees with adequate benefits and the need to investigate unsafe work environments and companies that take advantage of immigrant employees.

D. New lowans Centers.

Testimony included the services currently available to new lowans at New lowans Centers.

E. Education.

Testimony included the need for passage of a state version of the federal Development, Relief, and Education for Alien Minors Act (DREAM Act), the need for more Headstart programs, the need for teachers that reflect the demographic makeup of the community, the need for more English as a Second Language (ESL) classes at convenient times for new lowans, and the need for more funding for ESL programs.

F. Health and Human Services.

Testimony included predatory landlords continue to be a problem and the need for funding to support teen programs aimed at providing educational services to reduce the rates of teen pregnancy and gang participation.



G. Federal Issues.

Testimony included the need to pressure the U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services Bureau to cooperate more, act quickly, and clear paperwork barriers to citizenship and the inadequate availability of visa waivers for international professionals.

V. Davenport Public Hearing.

A. Public Safety.

Testimony included the need for legislation to criminalize the act of human trafficking.

B. Workforce Issues.

Testimony included the need for bilingual assistance and job training for new Iowans.

C. Benefits to the State.

Testimony included the ideas that new Iowans enhance the state through increased diversity; that the new Iowans in the state lead to more federal funding for the state; and that they add to the population of the state, to the potential workforce, and to the tax base. Testimony was received that the English-only law should be repealed.

D. New Iowans Centers.

Testimony included benefits that employers receive through the work of New Iowan Centers.

E. Education.

Testimony included requests for extended funding for English as a Second Language (ESL) programs, that it generally takes seven years for a student to attain the necessary proficiency in English; the need for passage of a state version of the federal Development, Relief, and Education for Alien Minors Act (DREAM Act); the need for the universities in the state to make available in-state tuition for students that are new Iowans; and the need for more interpreters and translators in order to keep parents properly involved.

F. Health and Human Services.

Testimony included the need for health insurance for new Iowans.

G. Financial Services Issues.

Testimony was received that three obstacles to immigrants obtaining financial services are trust, language barriers, and a lack of knowledge of financial services.

H. Federal Issues.

Testimony included the need to reduce bureaucratic barriers for new Iowans to receive resettlement assistance.



VI. Written Testimony Received by the Legislative Services Agency.

A. The written testimony received by the committee during the Des Moines public hearing are on file with the Legislative Services Agency and may be accessed on the Internet at: <http://www.legis.state.ia.us/lsadocs/IntComHand/2006/IHTCM001.PDF>

B. The written testimony received by the committee during the Storm Lake public hearing are on file with the Legislative Services Agency and may be accessed on the Internet at: <http://www.legis.state.ia.us/lsadocs/IntComHand/2006/IHTCM002.PDF>

C. The written testimony received by the committee during the Ottumwa public hearing are on file with the Legislative Services Agency and may be accessed on the Internet at: <http://www.legis.state.ia.us/lsadocs/IntComHand/2006/IHTCM003.PDF>

D. The written testimony received by the committee during the Davenport public hearing are on file with the Legislative Services Agency and may be accessed on the Internet at: <http://www.legis.state.ia.us/lsadocs/IntComHand/2006/IHTCM004.PDF>

E. The written testimony received by the committee outside of the public hearings are on file with the Legislative Services Agency and may be accessed on the Internet at: <http://www.legis.state.ia.us/lsadocs/IntComHand/2006/IHTCM005.PDF>

VII. November 21, 2005, Meeting.

A. Discussion.

The final meeting of the New Iowans Study Committee followed four public hearings held in Des Moines, Storm Lake, Ottumwa, and Davenport during the months of September and October. The Committee discussed testimony received by the Committee during the public hearings and consensus recommendations.

B. Consensus Recommendations.

The Committee discussed the following consensus recommendations:



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1. A state law prohibiting human trafficking should be adopted.
 2. Incentives should be used to attract bilingual public safety officers and medical personnel.
 3. Increase funding for preschool, after school, and adult ESL education and recommend increasing K-12 ESL funding from three to five years.
 4. The committee encourages those involved to continue making progress in establishing interpreter registration standards.
 5. Encourage the Governor to develop a task force that would include state agencies, private industry, and commerce that would make a recommendation to the General Assembly on how to address the public safety problems created by the lack of a comprehensive identification system and racial profiling.
 6. Encourage the United States Congress to reform federal immigration policy.
 7. The General Assembly should continue to monitor the efforts to streamline the process where eligible legal immigrants can obtain a comparable professional license in Iowa.
 8. Direct the Department of Education and the Board of Educational Examiners to develop a proposal for alternative licensure for bilingual persons interested in providing language instruction.
 9. Encourage local communities to develop a mentoring program for all young persons, including new Iowans.
 10. While understanding the legal issues involved, the General Assembly should invest in the education of young Iowans educated in this state and consider passage of the Iowa version of the DREAM Act.

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